

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 27, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It is our understanding that you will be meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on 28 January. We are writing to urge you to again call upon Turkey to comply with your Administration's long-standing position that in order to restore economic, political and cultural links with Armenia, Turkey should immediately lift its ongoing blockade of Armenia.

Given the challenges facing the United States following the seminal events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the war in Iraq, U.S. policy in Turkey and the South Caucasus will continue to focus on security, conflict resolution, ensuring open borders and commercial corridors and regional cooperation. However, Turkey's blockade of Armenia today does not promote regional security and prosperity, thus undermining our short- and medium-term policy objectives.

Last year, a State Department report estimated that the blockade is inflating Armenia's transportation costs by 30-35 percent, thereby stifling its trade and economy. This report also stated that opening the border would catalyze commercial opportunities for Turkey and Armenia in the fields of energy, trade and tourism, valued at \$1 billion per year.

Turkey's blockade of Armenia includes preventing U.S. and international humanitarian assistance from crossing its borders, a violation of U.S. law, international human rights and humanitarian standards, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) commitments to which Turkey is a signatory. Organizations such as the European Union (EU) have repeatedly called on Turkey to open the last closed border of Europe. Turkey is the only Council of Europe (CE) state and NATO member to engage in a blockade against a fellow CE state.

For these reasons, U.S., Turkish, NATO/Partnership for Peace and EU security and economic interests depend now more than ever on Turkey immediately and unconditionally lifting its ongoing ten-year blockade of Armenia. The Armenian government has repeatedly stated that it is ready to establish, without preconditions, full and normal relations with Turkey. The removal of all blockades and border closures in

and adjacent to the nations of the South Caucasus will provide positive incentives for U.S. private investment, increased trade with the West, and other forms of economic and political interactions with the global community. By lifting its blockade of Armenia, Turkey will be playing a constructive role in continuing the development of infrastructure necessary for regional communications, transportation, energy and trade on an East-West axis.

If there is to be a resolution of conflicts in the region and a reduction of tensions along borders, it is essential that Turkey move forthwith to lift this destructive blockade. Your meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan represents an important opportunity to reaffirm U.S.-Turkish ties and to secure modifications in Turkish policy that further regional peace and stability.

Sincerely,

  
JOE KNOLLENBERG

  
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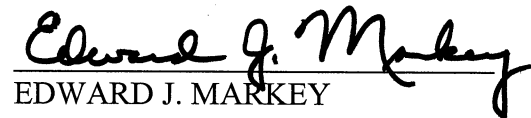
  
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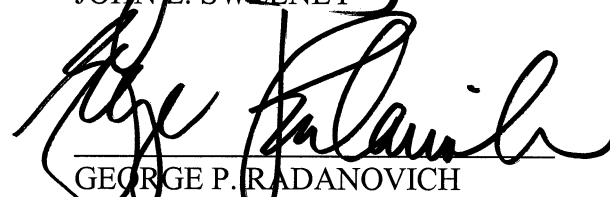
  
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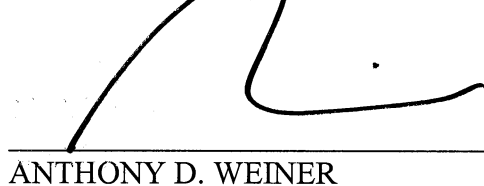
  
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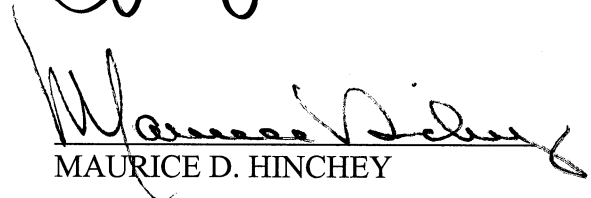
  
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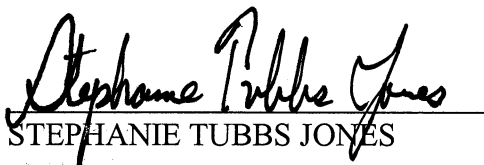
  
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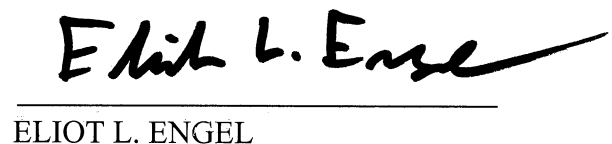
  
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January 27, 2003

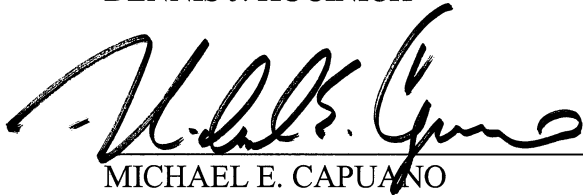
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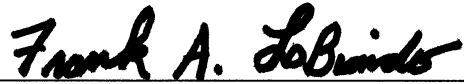
  
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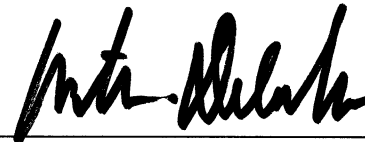
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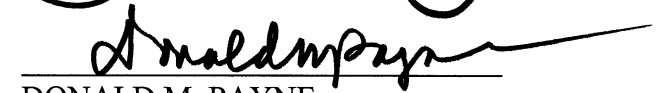
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